



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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PRE-FEDERATION COINAGE

2. PRE-FEDERATION COINAGE

Prior to Federation, the coins circulating throughout Australia were many and varied. On 19th November, 1800, a Proclamation in the following terms was issued by Governor King.

"Whereas representations of the Want of small Money experienced here have induced His Majesty to take into His gracious Consideration, the immediate Relief from this great inconvenience to all classes of His Subjects in this Colony; a quantity of Copper Coin has been received in His Majesty's Armed Vessel, Porpoise, and will be circulated by being paid for Grain, and Animal Food supplied His Majesty's Stores.

These are therefore to Give Notice, That, a Copper Coin weighing one English Ounce, and stamped with the Profile of His Majesty on the one side and of Britannia on the other, will be issued as above, at the rate of Two pence for each Copper: and that the same shall pass current in the Colony; and is to circulate at the aforesaid rate of Two pence.

And, that no one may plead ignorance of the rate of legality of this, or any other of the Coins circulated in this Colony, of which it does not appear that any regular Proclamation has ever collectively been issued, I have judged it most expedient herewith to publish the following Table of all the Specie legally circulating in this Colony, with the rates affixed to each, of which they shall be considered and be a legal Tender, in all payments or Transactions in this Colony.

Table of Specie

	£.	s.	d.
A Guinea	1	2	0
A Johanna	4	0	0
An Half Johanna	2	0	0
A Ducat	..	9	6
A Gold Mohur	1	17	6
A Pagoda	..	8	0
A Spanish Dollar	..	5	0
A Rupee	..	2	6
A Dutch Guilder	..	2	0
An English Shilling	..	1	1

When a sufficient quantity of Copper Coin is received in the Colony, of which Notice will be given, no private Notes or Cards will be allowed to circulate.

This supply of Copper having been sent to relieve the inconvenience of Persons requiring to make small payments; No persons are to collect the same for the purpose of making large payments; Nor shall it be deemed a legal Tender to offer the same in payment for any Sum exceeding Five pounds.

And it is hereby declared, that the exportation or importation except from His Majesty's Treasury, of any sum in Copper exceeding five pounds, shall be punished by Fine of Treble the Value, and forfeiture of the sum exported or imported.

On 3rd July, 1813, the following Proclamation by Governor Macquarie appeared in The Sydney Gazette :

"Whereas it has been deemed expedient to send a Quantity of Dollars to this Colony, for the purpose of assisting and improving the circulating Medium thereof, to be issued in such Manner, for such Value, and under such Regulations as in the Discretion of HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR will be best calculated to effect the above-mentioned Purposes :

And whereas HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR hath therefore thought proper to direct that a small circular Piece of Silver shall be struck out of the centre of every such Dollar, which, together with the remaining Part of every such Dollar, is intended to be issued and circulated at the Value and under the Regulations herein after described; And whereas such Directions are now carrying into effect, and such Silver Money will shortly be ready for Issue: It is therefore hereby ordered and directed, that each and every such small circular Piece of Silver, on one Side of which is impressed the Figure of a Crown, with the Words "New South Wales", above such Impression, and the Figures "1813" beneath the same, and on the other or reverse Side thereof are impressed the Words "Fifteen Pence", and having the Edges thereof grained, shall be Current within this Territory for the Sum of Fifteen Pence of lawful Money of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, of English Value and Currency.

And it is hereby, and by the Authority aforesaid, further ordered and directed, that every such larger Piece of Silver, being the remaining Part of every such Dollar, on the upper Part of one Side of which are impressed at its inner Rim the Words "Five Shillings", and at the lower Part of the said Rim, on the same Side, is also impressed the Figure of a Branch of Laurel, and on the reverse Side of which, at the upper Part of the said inner Rim, are impressed the Words "New South Wales", and at the lower Part of the same Rim, the Figures "1813", the Edges of the said inner Rim being grained on both Sides, shall be current within this Territory, and every Part thereof, for the Sum of Five Shillings and lawful Money of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, of English Value and Currency."

These two coins, which were to become known as 'holey dollars' and 'dumps', continued to be legal tender, together with later importations of dollars. However, they were reduced in value after 1822, to three-quarter and quarter dollars respectively. The volume of Spanish dollars in the Colony continued to grow until, by 1822, dollars valued at five shillings each were being used extensively for cash transactions and accounting, and there was considerable local agitation for the adoption of the dollar as the official currency.

Meanwhile, in 1825, the British Government issued an Order-in-Council with the objective of bringing the dual-currency to an end and of insisting on the sole use of English currency in the

Colony. The adoption of sterling nomenclature and of English coins proceeded gradually and special efforts were made to assure an adequate supply of the official coins. These were imported in sufficient quantity to have displaced dollars and other foreign coins by the 1830's (in Tasmania by the 1840's) and from then on English gold, silver and bronze coins, including gold sovereigns and half-sovereigns minted in Australia after 1855, were in use as the official currency until early in the present century.

3. POST-FEDERATION COINAGE

After Federation in 1901 the only coins which were legal tender within Australia until 1909 were English coins.

The Commonwealth Treasury administers the Coinage Act and all coins produced under authority of that Act have been ordered by the Treasury, mainly from the Royal Mint, London, and its Branches in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, but some orders were filled by Mints in the United States of America and in India. A total of some 2,600 million coins were issued, of which it is estimated that at least 1,500 million are still in circulation.

In 1946 the silver content of Australian coins was changed to 500 fine from 925 fine and over the years the pre-1946 coins, other than threepences, have been gradually withdrawn for melting down. It is now fairly rare to see silver coins, other than threepences, bearing dates earlier than 1946 in circulation.

4. ROYAL MINT BRANCHES IN AUSTRALIA

The first Royal Mint Branch in Australia was opened in Sydney in 1855. Branches were also opened in Melbourne in 1872, and in Perth in 1899. (See also pp. 815-6.) Established in the three main gold-producing colonies to refine and assay gold, the Branches were soon also minting sovereigns and half-sovereigns for the British Government. The Commonwealth Government exercised no control over the operations of these mints. Its role has been that of a commercial customer concerned with the quality and cost of the coin produced to its orders.

5. ROYAL AUSTRALIAN MINT, CANBERRA

The construction of the Royal Australian Mint in Canberra provided the Commonwealth Government for the first time with facilities for minting its own coinage. The opening of the Mint on 22nd February, 1965, by His Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, began a new era in Australia's history.

Construction of the Administrative Building commenced in February, 1963. It is a long wing of two floors and a basement and houses the Controller of the Mint and his administrative staff, extensive modern laboratories, the engraving section and the coin museum. It is faced with white sandstone and marble; terrazzo columns from ground to roof line support the wide eaves.

The massive Process Building is 100 yards square; it is faced with black basalt and white sandstone and, together with other areas, is floodlit at night. The coinage metals move anti-clockwise through the various processes: make-up of alloys, melting, rolling, annealing, blanking, burnishing, coining and packaging for issue. Production is 300 million coins yearly on the basis of one eight-hour shift daily. The Mint will produce only decimal coins which will be stored for issue on the changeover to decimal currency in February, 1966.

The total cost of the project was around £4,500,000 which includes machinery and equipment

costing £2,000,000.

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